



**1057th meeting of the
Pacific Coast Numismatic Society**

8:00PM Wednesday May 26, 2004

**Paper Ephemera of the
Office of Price Administration**

Herb Miles

**Fort Mason, Building C, Room 370
San Francisco, California**

**Pacific Coast Numismatic Society
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1055th Meeting April 28, 2004. The Granite Lady and the Fire Larry Reppeteau (reviewed by Herb Miles)

Larry Reppeteau presented a wonderful program on the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of April 18, 1906 and the saving of the Old Mint at 5th and Mission by the efforts of Mint personnel and a military company from Ft. Miley. On that fateful day, two tremors struck the city, the first at 5:13 lasting about 40 seconds and the second about 10 seconds later, lasting about 25 seconds. The second was the larger, estimated to be about an 8.25 on the modern Richter scale!

Although the earthquake did considerable damage on brick and rickety wooden buildings, the main damage occurred because of four days and nights of fire. In the downtown area, about 4 square miles of property was damaged or destroyed and approximately 28,000 buildings in the city perished. Deaths were placed at 498, injuries at 415, but there is some evidence that many more deaths and injuries occurred.

The mint, removed somewhat from the downtown financial area, was safe for a while but as the fire continued to spread, mint workers from the night shift and arriving workers on the day shift prepared to fight the approaching blaze. At near seven AM, a detachment of soldiers arrived to augment the mint workers and protect the gold and silver stored in the mint's vaults.

Superintendent Frank Leach, who lived in the East Bay, was last to arrive, disembarking at the Ferry Building and being forced to take a roundabout route to the mint. As he arrived and the fires neared the south and east sides of the building, he organized the 62 men (including himself) into squads assigned to all floors of the mint. Luckily for the newly pressed into service firefighters, a new water supply had recently been installed at the mint with hydrants on each floor, the water source an artesian well in the courtyard.

As Leach marshaled the men the approaching fire exploded nearby buildings setting lumber stored in the mint courtyard afire and causing a mighty effort to douse and keep new fires from starting. The fire was so hot that windows facing the flames melted like butter and the inexperienced fighters fought with buckets to save the building. Since the mint was constructed of sandstone and granite, heat caused loud flaking and along with the dynamiting of buildings by the army, the noise caused many of the mint's protectors to wonder if their nerves would ever recover. New fires started when glassless windows let in embers from nearby

structures, so the men spent many hours rushing from room to room and floor to floor until about 5 PM, the flames subsided, the smoke cleared, and the Granite Lady stood amid a sea of slowly burning ash and embers.

Exhibits

Michael Wehner exhibited a portion of his collection of 1906 San Francisco Hibbler & Kappen Earthquake & Fire medals; a few San Francisco Mint medals, a silver bar SF Mint centennial, one of Dave Lange's wooden nickels about saving the old mint, a couple of earthquake silver rounds, and a tiny "Meet me in SF" medal with a Phoenix rising from the ashes.

Rick Webster brought his recently acquired George VI South Africa coin, a Canadian 1985 Centennial piece, and two Panama Pacific International Exposition H&K so-called dollars, one from Louisiana, the other from Montana.

Ken Takahashi corrected Herb's review of his Chinese talk of the prior month, and brought an additional Chinese coin from 9-23 AD from the emperor Wang Mun, a coin almost 2000 years old!

Gordon Donnell exhibited a number of items, a Pan-Pac \$50 gold copy, a silver panda from 2004, an Numismatic Guaranty Corporation sample 25c slab, a Numismatic News ashtray given by former ANA president John Wilson, banquet favors in the form of Liberty Seated medals of silver, bronze, and antiqued bronze, and a new 5 cent piece.

Mark Wm. Clark brought a couple of panoramic views of the aftermath of the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906 and a French die engraver medal, plus an Emperor Norton article from the San Mateo Peninsula Life magazine of August 1947.

Jerry Schimmel brought a number of SF Earthquake souvenir medals, one with a wounded bear and one picturing the Cliff House and old Post Office building on 7th street, both of which survived the 1906 earthquake and fire.

Steve Huston exhibited some very ancient SF Earthquake souvenir medals, well not so ancient, and showed a photograph that he has taken of two in his collection, mentioning that there is a controversy over whether some of the medals might be sterling silver instead of a silver plate. He is investigating whether several he has access to turn out to be solid silver versus a silverplate!

Raffle

Federico Castillo won a copy of a 1947 copy of "San Francisco's Dining Out Guide"

Lori Reppeteau won a Wells Fargo & Company leather checkholder.

Gordon Donnell won twice. First he won a Wells Fargo & Company fantasy medal showing a nice coast-to-coast map of the United States, then he took home a Silver Round celebrating Joyce & Lee Kuntz and their 25 years of being Numismatic Ambassadors.

Larry Reppeteau won a California Midwinter Fair Souvenir Medal featuring the Seal of California and a beautiful pictorial on the reverse, H&K #261.

CSNA Northern California educational symposium

Please register now for the educational symposium. An exciting set of experts have agreed to speak. They are:

Joseph Lang "Chinese Cash,"

Charles Fracchia "Early California Banking,"

Hal Dunn "Carson City Mint"

Don Allen "Past, Present, Future: A Canadian Perspective on the Evolving Monetary Scene."

The event will be in Room 370 at Fort Mason in San Francisco from 10AM to 3PM on Saturday, October 2, 2004. As in past years, a box lunch is available for \$10, *payable in advance only*. You can help the Society make this event a success by spreading the word to other Northern California numismatists.